Incident Command System
Summary of Lesson Content

ICS100 – Intro to Incident Command System

The ICS Overview introduces you to:

- The background and development of ICS.
- ICS as the standard for emergency management across the country.
- ICS as interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible.
- Applications of ICS.

The Incident Command System (ICS)

An incident is an occurrence, either caused by humans or a natural phenomenon that requires action by emergency service personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or the environment.

Examples of incidents include:

- Fire, both structural and wildfire.
- Hazardous materials incidents.
- Search and rescue missions.
- Oil spills.
- Natural disasters.
- Terrorist/WMD events.
- Planned events, such as parades or political rallies, just to name a few.

Because of today's budget constraints and limited staffing of local, State, and Federal agencies, it's not possible for any one agency to handle all the management and resource needs for the increasing numbers of incidents nationwide. Local, State, and Federal agencies must work together in a smooth, coordinated effort under the same management system.

The Incident Command System, or ICS, is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept. ICS allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries.

ICS has considerable internal flexibility. It can grow or shrink to meet different needs. This flexibility makes it a very cost effective and efficient management approach for both small and large situations.

History of the Incident Command System (ICS)

The Incident Command System (ICS) was developed in the 1970s following a series of catastrophic fires in California's urban interface. Property damage ran into the millions, and many people died or were injured. The personnel assigned to determine the causes of

this disaster studied the case histories and discovered that response problems could rarely be attributed to lack of resources or failure of tactics. What were the lessons learned?

Surprisingly, studies found that response problems were far more likely to result from inadequate management than from any other single reason.

Weaknesses in incident management were often due to:

- Lack of personnel accountability, including unclear chains of command and supervision.
- Poor communication due to both inefficient uses of available communications systems and conflicting codes and terminology.
- Lack of an orderly, systematic planning process.
- No common, flexible, predesigned management structure that enables commanders to delegate responsibilities and manage workloads efficiently.
- No predefined methods to integrate interagency requirements into the management structure and planning process effectively.

A poorly managed incident response can be devastating to our economy, the food supply, and our health and safety. With so much at stake, we must effectively manage our response efforts. The Incident Command System, or ICS, allows us to do so. ICS is a proven management system based on successful business practices. This course introduces you to ICS and the vital role that you can play.

ICS Built on Best Practices

ICS is:

- A proven management system based on successful business practices.
- The result of decades of lessons learned in the organization and management of emergency incidents.

This system represents organizational "best practices," and has become the standard for emergency management across the country.

What ICS Is Designed To Do

Designers of the system recognized early that ICS must be interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible to meet the following management challenges:

- Meet the needs of incidents of any kind or size.
- Be usable for routine or planned events such as conferences, as well as large and complex emergency incidents.
- Allow personnel from a variety of agencies to meld rapidly into a common management structure.
- Provide logistical and administrative support to operational staff.

- Be cost effective by avoiding duplication of efforts.

ICS has been tested in more than 30 years of emergency and non-emergency applications, by all levels of government and in the private sector.

Applications for the Use of ICS

Applications for the use of ICS have included:

- Routine or planned events (e.g., celebrations, parades, and concerts).
- Fires, hazardous materials, and multicasualty incidents.
- Multijurisdiction and multiagency disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, and winter storms.
- Search and rescue missions.
- Biological pest eradication programs.
- Biological outbreaks and disease containment.
- Acts of terrorism.

ICS Features

In this course, you will learn about the following ICS features:

- ICS Organization
- Incident Facilities
- Incident Action Plan
- Span of Control
- Common Responsibilities

The ICS Organization: Part I introduces you to the:

- Organizational structure of ICS.
- Five major management functions.
- Principle of span of control.
- Use of position titles.
- Roles and responsibilities of the Incident Commander and Command Staff.

ICS Organization

There is no correlation between the ICS organization and the administrative structure of any single agency or jurisdiction. This is deliberate, because confusion over different position titles and organizational structures has been a significant stumbling block to effective incident management in the past.

For example, FEMA has an Office of Information Technology Services. This office has no relationship to the position of Communication Unit Leader in ICS, which is

responsible for the hardware that the ICS organization uses to communicate.

Performance of Management Functions

Every incident or event requires that certain management functions be performed. The problem must be identified and assessed, a plan to deal with it developed and implemented, and the necessary resources procured and paid for.

Regardless of the size of the incident, these management functions still will apply.

Five Major Management Functions

There are five major management functions that are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. These functions apply whether you are handling a routine emergency, organizing for a major non-emergency event, or managing a response to a major disaster. The five major management functions are:

Management Function Descriptions

Below is a brief description of each ICS function:

- **Incident Command:** Sets the incident objectives, strategies, and priorities and has overall responsibility at the incident or event.
- **Operations:** Conducts tactical operations to carry out the plan. Develops the tactical objectives and organization, and directs all tactical resources.
- **Planning:** Prepares and documents the Incident Action Plan to accomplish the objectives, collects and evaluates information, maintains resource status, and maintains documentation for incident records.
- **Logistics:** Provides support, resources, and all other services needed to meet the operational objectives.
- **Finance/Administration:** Monitors costs related to the incident. Provides accounting, procurement, time recording, and cost analyses.

Organizational Structure—Incident Commander

On small incidents and events, one person, the Incident Commander, may accomplish all five management functions. In fact, the Incident Commander is the only position that is

always staffed in ICS applications. However, large incidents or events may require that these functions be set up as separate Sections within the organization.

Organizational Structure—ICS Sections

Each of the primary ICS Sections may be subdivided as needed. The ICS organization has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.

A basic ICS operating guideline is that the person at the top of the organization is responsible until the authority is delegated to another person. Thus, on smaller incidents when these additional persons are not required, the Incident Commander will personally accomplish or manage all aspects of the incident organization.

ICS Span of Control

Another basic operating guideline concerns the supervisory structure of the organization.

Span of control pertains to the number of individuals or resources that one supervisor can manage effectively during emergency response incidents or special events. Maintaining an effective span of control is particularly important on incidents where safety and accountability are a top priority.

Maintaining Span of Control

Maintaining adequate span of control throughout the ICS organization is very important.

Effective span of control on incidents may vary from three (3) to seven (7), and **a ratio of one (1) supervisor to five (5) reporting elements is recommended.**

If the number of reporting elements falls outside of these ranges, expansion or consolidation of the organization may be necessary. There may be exceptions, usually in lower-risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

ICS Position Titles

To maintain span of control, the ICS organization can be divided into many levels of supervision. At each level, individuals with primary responsibility positions have distinct titles. Using specific ICS position titles serves three important purposes:

- Titles provide a common standard for all users. For example, if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, etc., this lack of consistency can cause confusion at the incident.
- The use of distinct titles for ICS positions allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals rather than by seniority.
- Standardized position titles are useful when requesting qualified personnel. For example, in deploying personnel, it is important to know if the positions needed

are Unit Leaders, clerks, etc.

Supervisory Position Titles

The titles for all supervisory levels of the organization are shown in the table below.

Organizational Level	Title	Support Position
Incident Command	Incident Commander	Deputy
Command Staff	Officer	Assistant
General Staff (Section)	Chief	Deputy
Branch	Director	Deputy
Division/Group	Supervisor	N/A
Unit	Leader	Manager
Strike Team/Task Force	Leader	Single Resource Boss

ICS Organizational Components

Sections: The organizational levels with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration). The person in charge of each Section is designated as a Chief.

Divisions: Used to divide an incident geographically. The person in charge of each Division is designated as a Supervisor.

Groups: Used to describe functional areas of operations. The person in charge of each Group is designated as a Supervisor.

Branches: Used when the number of Divisions or Groups extends the span of control. Can be either geographical or functional. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director.

Task Forces: A combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Task Force Leader.

Strike Teams: A set number of resources of the same kind and type with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Strike Team Leader.

Single Resources: May be individuals, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor that can be used at an incident.

Incident Commander's Overall Role

The Incident Commander has overall responsibility for managing the incident. The incident Commander must be fully briefed and should have a written delegation of authority. Initially, assigning tactical resources and overseeing operations will be under the direct supervision of the Incident Commander.

Personnel assigned by the Incident Commander have the authority of their assigned positions, even if it's not the same authority that they have at home.

Incident Commander Responsibilities

In addition to having overall responsibility for managing the entire incident, the Incident Commander:

- Has responsibility for ensuring incident safety, providing information services to internal and external stakeholders, and establishing and maintaining liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.
- May have one or more Deputies from the same agency or from other agencies or jurisdictions. Deputy Incident Commanders must be as qualified as the Incident Commander.

Selecting and Changing Incident Commanders

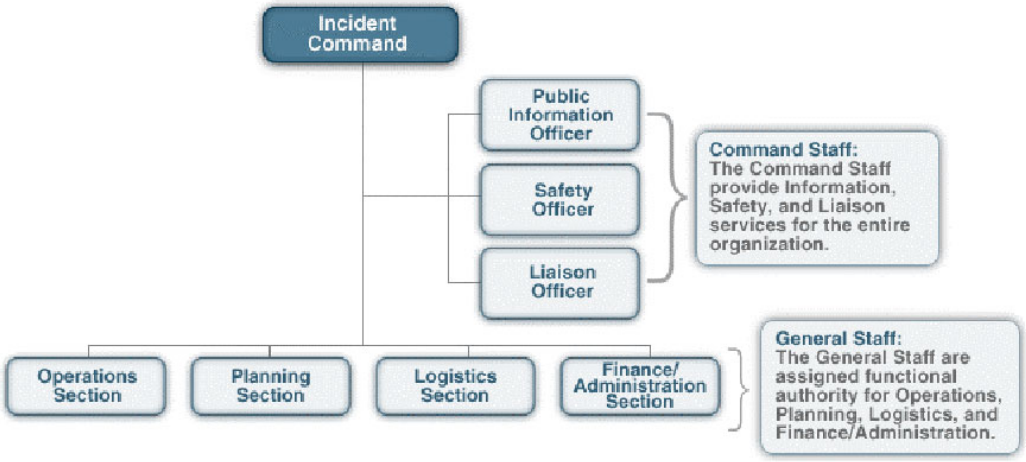
As incidents expand in size, change in jurisdiction or discipline, or become more complex, command may change to a more experienced Incident Commander.

Rank, grade, and seniority are not the factors used to select the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander is always a highly qualified individual trained to lead the incident response.

Transfer of command at an incident always requires that there be a full briefing for the incoming Incident Commander and notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.

Expanding the Organization

As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to the Command Staff and the General Staff.



Command Staff

Depending upon the size and type of incident or event, it may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate personnel to provide information, safety, and liaison services for the entire organization. In ICS, these personnel make up the Command Staff and consist of the:

- **Public Information Officer**, who serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders, including the media or other organizations seeking information directly from the incident or event.
- **Safety Officer**, who monitors safety conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all assigned personnel.
- **Liaison Officer**, who serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assisting at an incident.

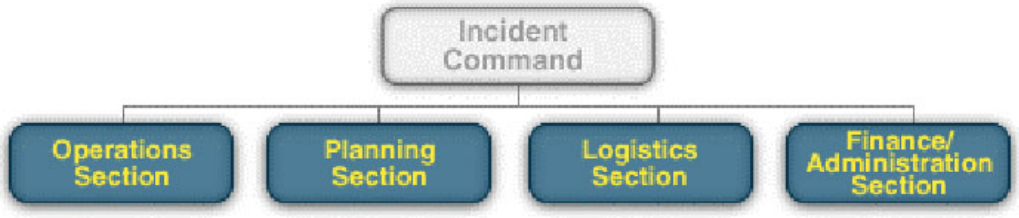
<u>The ICS Organization: Part II introduces you to the:</u>

- Roles and responsibilities of the General Staff.
- Expansion and contraction of the ICS organization.

General Staff

Expansion of the incident may also require the delegation of authority for the performance of the other management functions. The people who perform the other four management functions are designated as the General Staff. The General Staff is made up of four Sections: Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

ICS Section Chiefs and Deputies



As mentioned previously, the person in charge of each Section is designated as a **Chief**. Section Chiefs have the ability to expand their Section to meet the needs of the situation. Each of the Section Chiefs may have a Deputy, or more than one, if necessary. The Deputy:

- May assume responsibility for a specific portion of the primary position, work as relief, or be assigned other tasks.
- Should always be as proficient as the person for whom he or she works.

In large incidents, especially where multiple disciplines or jurisdictions are involved, the use of Deputies from other organizations can greatly increase interagency coordination.

Operations Section

Until Operations is established as a separate Section, the Incident Commander has direct control of tactical resources. The Incident Commander will determine the need for a separate Operations Section at an incident or event. When the Incident Commander activates an Operations Section, he or she will assign an individual as the Operations Section Chief.

Operations Section Chief

The Operations Section Chief will develop and manage the Operations Section to accomplish the incident objectives set by the Incident Commander. The Operations Section Chief is normally the person with the greatest technical and tactical expertise in dealing with the problem at hand.

Operations Section: Maintaining Span of Control

The Operations function is where the tactical fieldwork is done. Therefore, most incident resources are assigned to the Operations Section. Often the most hazardous activities are carried out there. Because of this, it is necessary to monitor carefully the number of resources that report to any one supervisor. The following supervisory levels can be added to help manage span of control:

- **Divisions** are used to divide an incident geographically.
- **Groups** are used to describe functional areas of operation.
- **Branches** are used when the number of Divisions or Groups extends the span of control and can be either geographical or functional.

Operations Section: Divisions

Divisions are used to divide an incident **geographically**. The person in charge of each Division is designated as a **Supervisor**. How the area is divided is determined by the needs of the incident.

The most common way to identify Divisions is by using alphabet characters (A, B, C, etc.). Other identifiers may be used as long as Division identifiers are known by assigned responders.

The important thing to remember about ICS Divisions is that they are established to **divide an incident into geographical areas of operation**.

Operations Section: Groups
Groups are used to describe **functional** areas of operation. The person in charge of each Group is designated as a **Supervisor**.

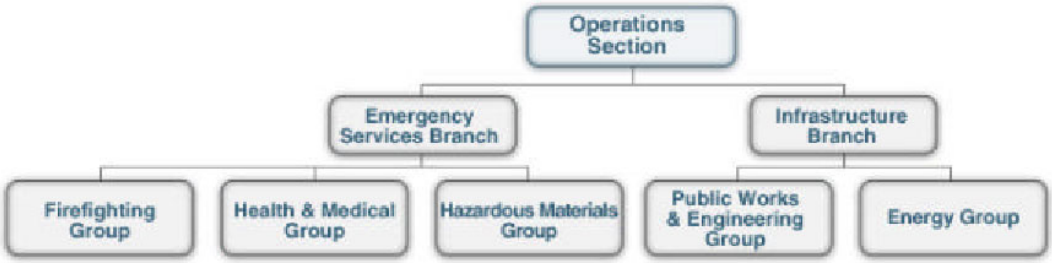
The kind of Group to be established will also be determined by the needs of an incident. Groups are normally labeled according to the job that they are assigned (e.g., Human Services Group, Infrastructure Support Group, etc.). Groups will work wherever their assigned task is needed and are not limited geographically.

Operations Section: Divisions and Groups

Divisions and Groups can be used together on an incident. Divisions and Groups are at an equal level in the organization. One does not supervise the other. When a Group is working within a Division on a special assignment, Division and Group Supervisors must closely coordinate their activities.

Operations Section: Establishing Branches

If the number of Divisions or Groups exceeds the span of control, it may be necessary to establish another level of organization within the Operations Section, called Branches. The person in charge of each Branch is designated as a Director. Deputies may also be used at the Branch level. Branches can be divided into Groups or Divisions—or can be a combination of both.



Operations Section: Branches, Other Factors

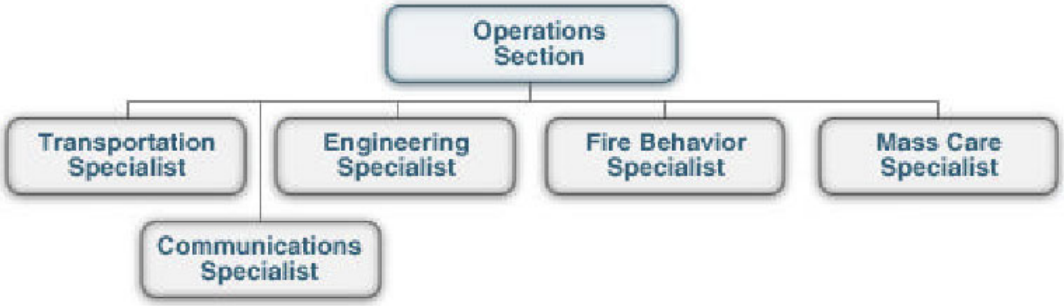
While span of control is a common reason to establish Branches, additional considerations may also indicate the need to use these Branches, including:

Multidiscipline Incidents. Some incidents have multiple disciplines involved (e.g., Firefighting, Health & Medical, Hazardous Materials, Public Works & Engineering, Energy, etc.) that may create the need to set up incident operations around a functional Branch structure.
Multijurisdiction Incidents. In some incidents it may be better to organize the incident around jurisdictional lines. In these situations, Branches may be set up to reflect jurisdictional boundaries.
Very Large Incidents. Very large incidents may be organized using geographic or functional Branches.

Operations Section: Expanding and Contracting

The Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief at an incident may work initially with only a few single resources or staff members.

The Operations Section usually develops from the bottom up. The organization will expand to include needed levels of supervision as more and more resources are deployed.

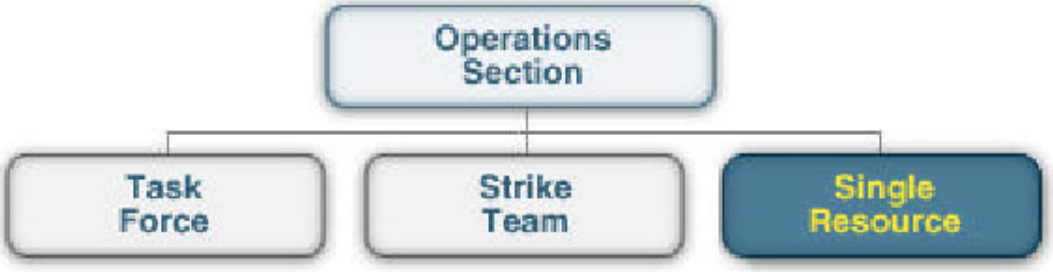


Task Forces are a combination of mixed resources with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Leader. Task Forces can be versatile combinations of resources and their use is encouraged. The combining of resources into Task Forces allows for several resource elements to be managed under one individual's supervision, thus lessening the span of control of the Division/Group Supervisor.

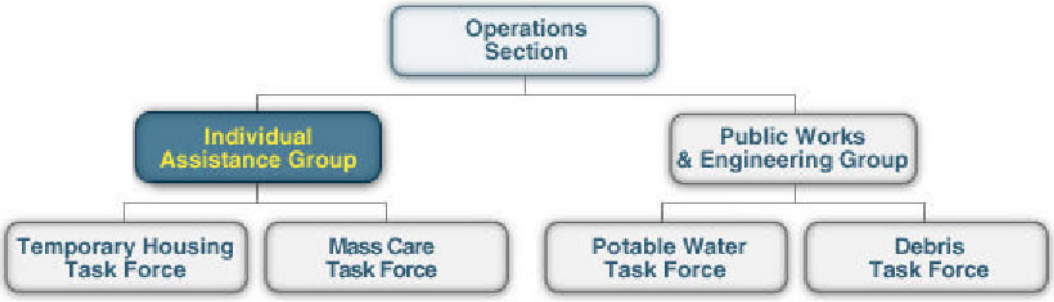
Strike Teams are a set number of resources of the same kind and type with common communications operating under the direct supervision of a Strike Team Leader. Strike Teams are highly effective management units. The foreknowledge that all elements have the same capability and the knowledge of how many will be applied allows for better planning, ordering, utilization and management.

Operations Section: Expanding and Contracting (continued)

Single Resources may be individuals, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified supervisor that can be used at an incident.



As we covered earlier, it is important to maintain an effective span of control. Maintaining span of control can be done easily by grouping resources into Divisions or Groups.



Another way to add supervision levels is to create Branches within the Operations Section.

Operations Section: Expanding and Contracting (continued)

At some point, the Operations Section and the rest of the ICS organization will contract. The decision to contract will be based on the achievement of tactical objectives. Demobilization planning begins upon activation of the first personnel and continues until the ICS organization ceases operation.

Planning Section

The Incident Commander will determine if there is a need for a Planning Section and designate a Planning Section Chief. If no Planning Section is established, the Incident Commander will perform all planning functions. It is up to the Planning Section Chief to activate any needed additional staffing.

Planning Section: Major Activities

The major activities of the Planning Section may include:

- Collecting, evaluating, and displaying incident intelligence and information.
- Preparing and documenting Incident Action Plans.
- Conducting long-range and/or contingency planning.
- Developing plans for demobilization as the incident winds down.
- Maintaining incident documentation.
- Tracking resources assigned to the incident.

Planning Section: Units

The Planning Section can be further staffed with four Units. In addition, Technical Specialists who provide special expertise useful in incident management and response may also be assigned to work in the Planning Section. Depending on the needs, Technical Specialists may also be assigned to other Sections in the organization.

Incident Action Plan

Every incident must have a verbal or written Incident Action Plan. The purpose of this plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with direction for actions to be implemented during the operational period identified in the plan.

Incident Action Plans include the measurable tactical operations to be achieved and are prepared around a timeframe called an **Operational Period**.

Incident Action Plan Elements

At the simplest level, all Incident Action Plans must have four elements:

- What do we want to do?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- How do we communicate with each other?
- What is the procedure if someone is injured?

Logistics Section

The Incident Commander will determine if there is a need for a Logistics Section at the incident, and designate an individual to fill the position of the Logistics Section Chief. If no Logistics Section is established, the Incident Commander will perform all logistical functions. The size of the incident, complexity of support needs, and the incident length

will determine whether a separate Logistics Section is established. Additional staffing is the responsibility of the Logistics Section Chief.

Logistics Section: Major Activities

The Logistics Section is responsible for all of the services and support needs, including:

- Obtaining, maintaining, and accounting for essential personnel, equipment, and supplies.
- Providing communication planning and resources.
- Setting up food services.
- Setting up and maintaining incident facilities.
- Providing support transportation.
- Providing medical services to incident personnel.

Logistics Section: Branches and Units

The Logistics Section can be further staffed by two Branches and six Units.

Not all of the Units may be required; they will be established based on need. The titles of the Units are descriptive of their responsibilities.

Finance/Administration Section

The Incident Commander will determine if there is a need for a Finance/Administration Section at the incident and designate an individual to fill the position of the Finance/Administration Section Chief.

If no Finance/Administration Section is established, the Incident Commander will perform all finance functions.

Finance/Administration Section: Major Activities

The Finance/Administration Section is set up for any incident that requires incident-specific financial management. The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for:

- Contract negotiation and monitoring.
- Timekeeping.
- Cost analysis.
- Compensation for injury or damage to property.

Finance/Administration Section: Increasing Use

More and larger incidents are using a Finance/Administration Section to monitor costs. Smaller incidents may also require certain Finance/Administration support.

For example, the Incident Commander may establish one or more Units of the Finance/Administration Section for such things as procuring special equipment, contracting with a vendor, or making cost estimates for alternative response strategies.

Finance/Administration Section: Units

The Finance/Administration Section may staff four Units. Not all Units may be required; they will be established based on need.

The ICS Features and Principles introduce you to:

- Use of common terminology.
- Incident facilities.
- Common ICS responsibilities.

Common Terminology

The ability to communicate within ICS is absolutely critical. Using standard or common terminology is essential to ensuring efficient, clear communication. ICS requires the use of common terminology, meaning standard titles for facilities and positions within the organization.

Common terminology also includes the use of "clear text"—that is, communication without the use of agency-specific codes or jargon. **In other words, use plain English.**

Organizational Elements and Resources

As you learned earlier, organizational elements require a consistent pattern for designating each level within the ICS organization.

Resources are also assigned common designations. Many kinds of resources may also be classified by type, which will indicate their capabilities (e.g., types of helicopters, sprayers, etc.).

Organizational Facilities

Common terminology is also used to define incident facilities, help clarify the activities

that take place at a specific facility, and identify what members of the organization can be found there.

Incident facilities will be addressed in greater detail later in this lesson.

Use of Position Titles

As mentioned previously, ICS Command and General Staff positions have distinct titles.

- Only the Incident Commander is called Commander.
- Only the heads of the Sections in the General Staff are called Chiefs.

Learning and using this standard terminology helps reduce confusion between the day-to-day position occupied by an individual and his or her position at the incident.

Integrated Communications

Every incident requires a Communications Plan. Communications includes:

- The "hardware" systems that transfer information.
- Planning for the use of all available communications resources.
- The procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.

Communications needs for large incidents may exceed available radio frequencies. Some incidents are conducted entirely without radio support. In such situations, other communications resources (cell phones, alpha pagers, e-mail, and secure phone lines) may be the only communication methods used to coordinate communication and to transfer large amounts of data efficiently.

Incident Facilities

Incident activities may be accomplished from a variety of facilities. Facilities will be established depending on the kind and complexity of the incident or event. It is important to know and understand the names and functions of the principal ICS facilities.

Only those facilities needed for any given incident may be activated. Some incidents may require facilities not included in the standard list.

Incident Facilities Virtual Tour

The **Incident Command Post**, or ICP, is the location from which the Incident Commander oversees all incident operations. There is only one ICP for each incident or event. Every incident or event must have some form of an Incident Command Post. The ICP may be located in a vehicle, trailer, tent, or within a building. The ICP will be positioned outside of the present and potential hazard zone but close enough to the

incident to maintain command.

Staging Areas are temporary locations at an incident where personnel and equipment are kept while waiting for tactical assignments. Staging Areas should be located close enough to the incident for a timely response, but far enough away to be out of the immediate impact zone. There may be more than one Staging Area at an incident. Each Staging Area will have a Staging Area Manager who reports to the Operations Section Chief or to the Incident Commander if an Operations Section has not been established.

A **Base** is the location from which primary logistics functions are coordinated an administered. The Base may be collocated with the Incident Command Post. There is only one Base per incident.

A **Camp** is the location where resources may be kept to support incident operations if a Base is not accessible to all resources. Not all incidents will have Camps.

A **Helibase** is the location from which helicopter-centered air operations are conducted. Helibases are generally used on a more long-term basis and include such services a fueling and maintenance.

Helispots are more temporary facilities used for loading and unloading personnel and cargo. Large incidents may require more than one Helibase and several Helispots.

General Guidelines—Lengthy Assignments

Many incidents last only a short time, and may not require travel. Other deployments may require a lengthy assignment away from home. Below are general guidelines for incidents requiring extended stays or travel:

- Assemble a travel kit containing any special technical information (e.g., maps, manuals, contact lists, and reference materials).
- Prepare personal items needed for your estimated length of stay, including medications, cash, credit cards, etc.
- Ensure that family members know your destination and how to contact you.
- Determine appropriate travel authorizations.
- Familiarize yourself with travel and transportation arrangements.
- Determine your return mode of transportation (if possible).
- Determine payroll procedures (at incident or through home agency).
- Be sure to take your passport and birth certificate for OCONUS assignments.

General Guidelines—Roles and Authorities

In addition to preparing for your travel arrangements, it is important to understand your role and authorities.

- Review your emergency assignment. Know who you will report to and what your

position will be.
- Establish a clear understanding of your decisionmaking authority.
- Determine communications procedures for contacting your headquarters or home office (if necessary).
- Identify purchasing authority and procedures.
- Determine how food and lodging will be provided (incident, personal, and agency).

Actions Prior to Departure

Upon receiving an incident assignment, your deployment briefing should include, but may not be limited to, the following information:
- Incident type and name or designation
- Incident check-in location
- Specific assignment
- Reporting date and time
- Travel instructions
- Communications instructions
- Special support requirements (facilities, equipment transportation and off-loading, etc.)
- Travel authorization for air, rental car, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses

Check-In at the Incident: Activities

Check-in officially logs you in at the incident. The check-in process and information helps to:

- Ensure personnel accountability.
- Track resources.
- Prepare personnel for assignments and reassignments.
- Locate personnel in case of an emergency.
- Establish personnel time records and payroll documentation.
- Plan for releasing personnel.
- Organize the demobilization process.

Check-In at the Incident: Locations

Check in only once. Check-in locations may be found at several incident facilities, including:

- Incident Command Post (Resources Unit).
- Base or Camp(s).
- Staging Areas.
- Helibase.
- Note that these locations may not all be activated at every incident.

Check-in information is usually recorded on ICS Form 211, Check-In List.

Common Responsibilities at the Incident

After check-in, locate your incident supervisor and obtain your initial briefing. The briefing information helps you plan your tasks and communicate with others. Briefings received and given should include:

- Current situation assessment.
- Identification of your specific job responsibilities.
- Identification of coworkers.
- Location of work area.
- Identification of eating and sleeping arrangements, as appropriate.
- Procedural instructions for obtaining additional supplies, services, and personnel.
- Operational periods/work shifts.
- Required safety procedures and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as appropriate.

Incident Recordkeeping

All incidents require some form of recordkeeping. Requirements vary depending upon the agencies involved and the nature of the incident. Detailed information on using ICS forms will be covered in other training sessions, or may be found in the Forms Manual.

Below are general guidelines for incident recordkeeping:

- Print or type all entries.
- Enter dates by month/day/year format.
- Enter date and time on all forms and records. Use local time.
- Fill in all blanks. Use N/A as appropriate.
- Use military 24-hour time.

Communications Discipline

Important considerations related to communications include:

- Observing strict radio/telephone procedures.
- Using plain English in all communications. Codes should not be used in radio transmissions. Limit the use of discipline-specific jargon, especially on interdisciplinary incidents.
- Limiting radio and telephone traffic to essential information only. Plan what you are going to say.
- Following procedures for secure communications as required.

Incident Demobilization

Agency requirements for demobilization may vary considerably. General demobilization guidelines for all personnel are to:

- Complete all work assignments and required forms/reports.
- Brief replacements, subordinates, and supervisor.
- Follow incident and agency check-out procedures.
- Provide adequate followup contact information.
- Return any incident-issued equipment or other nonexpendable supplies.
- Complete postincident reports, critiques, evaluations, and medical followup.
- Complete all payment and/or payroll issues or obligations.
- Report to assigned departure points on time or slightly ahead of schedule.
- Stay with your group until you arrive at your final destination (as appropriate).

ICS200 – Incident Command System Basic

Course Overview

This course provides training for Federal workers who will serve on Federal emergency response teams and will use the Incident Command System (ICS).

Why Use ICS?

As you learned in the ICS-100 course, the Incident Command System is an effective method for managing incident response activities. All governmental organizations are using ICS to manage the Roaring River Flood response because it:

- **Allows for the efficient delegation of responsibilities.** This is a big incident and is more than one person can manage. It will require all five ICS functions operating to manage effectively. Effective incident management reduces potential chaos, establishes priorities, and helps manage workloads and resources.
- **Establishes a clear chain of command.** All incident personnel know where they fit in the organization, who their supervisors are, and what they are responsible for achieving.
- **Avoids unclear communications.** The use of common terminology allows personnel from different organizations to communicate with each other without being misunderstood.
- **Ensures key functions are covered.** Command staff are assigned key functions such as safety, liaison other organizations, and public information. One voice is used to disseminate clear, accurate information.
- **Establishes a process to develop an Incident Action Plan for the next operational period.**

Why Use ICS? Effective Management

ICS is a management system, not just an organizational chart. The organization is just one of ICS's major features. The information that you acquire from this training will help to sharpen your management skills, and better equip you to be a fully effective member of the incident or event management team. In the upcoming lessons, you will learn how the ICS management tool is used to address the challenges facing the Roaring River Valley.

ICS Features and Principles

The **ICS Features and Principles** lesson describes the principles that constitute the Incident Command System. Collectively, these define the unique features of ICS as an incident or event management system.

Establishment of Command

The first arriving authority at the scene, who has jurisdiction for the incident, establishes incident command and identifies the initial Incident Command Post (ICP). The initial Incident Commander will also:

- **Establish needed authorization and delegations of authority.** These agreements provide the Incident Commander with the authority needed to manage the incident. Most often, these authorizations or delegations of authority are included in agency operating plans, local mutual aid agreements, Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and/or interagency operating plans.
- **Begin establishing incident facilities.** The next priority is to establish the incident facilities, beginning with the Incident Command Post.
- **Develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) for each operational period.**

Responsibility for Incident Command

Frequently, command does not stay with the initial Incident Commander. A primary principle of ICS is the ability to transfer command to the most experienced and qualified person as the Incident Commander, regardless of that employee's agency.

Transfer of Command

The process of moving the responsibility for incident command from one Incident Commander to another is called **transfer of command**.

If a transfer of command is to take place, the initial Incident Commander will remain in charge until transfer of command is accomplished. Command may transfer to more qualified or more experienced personnel from the same agency, or be transferred to an employee of another responsible agency.

More qualified persons arriving at an incident may:

- Assume command (according to agency guidelines).
- Maintain command as it is.
- Request a more experienced Incident Commander.

Transition Meeting

Transfer of command begins with a transition meeting. The outgoing Incident Commander briefs the new Incident Commander on the extent of damage, probable response needs, and resources on scene and their locations. The briefing may also include safety concerns, political issues, and other concerns the new Incident Commander should be aware of. Both the outgoing and incoming Incident Commanders will agree on a date and time when the transfer of command will be effective.

Unified Command

In ICS, Unified Command is a unified team effort that allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either geographical or functional, to assign an Incident Commander to the Unified Command. The Incident Commanders in the Unified Command form an Incident Management Team to establish a common set of incident objectives and strategies.

This type of command structure is accomplished without losing or giving up agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.

Other Reasons to Transfer Command

Command also may be transferred when:

- A jurisdiction or agency is legally required to take command.
- Changing command makes good sense.
- The incident complexity changes.
- There is turnover of personnel on long or extended incidents.
- Personal emergencies or other issues require a transfer of command.
- Agency administrators direct a change in command.

Incident Action Planning Process

In ICS, considerable emphasis is placed on developing effective Incident Action Plans. A planning process has been developed to assist Incident Managers in the systematic and orderly development of an Incident Action Plan. The determination of the need for written Incident Action Plans is based on the requirements of the incident and the judgment of the Incident Commander.

Incident Planning Process

Within ICS, the incident planning process covers six essential steps. These steps take place on every incident regardless of size or complexity.

1. Understand agency policy and direction.
2. Assess incident situation.
3. Establish incident objectives.
4. Select appropriate strategy or strategies to achieve objectives.
5. Perform tactical direction (applying tactics appropriate to the strategy, assigning the right resources, and monitoring their performance).
6. Provide necessary followup (changing strategy or tactics, adding or subtracting resources, etc.).

ICS Management Functions

Five major management functions are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops.

Organizational chart showing the Incident Command function and four subordinate functions: Operations Section, Planning Section, Logistics Section, and Finance/Administration Section.

Organizational Flexibility

The ICS organization reflects the principle of management by objectives. Every incident has different requirements. The organizational structure should reflect only what is required to meet and support planned incident objectives.

The size and structure of the current organization is determined by the incident objectives. Each activated element must have a person in charge of it. As objectives are achieved, elements that are no longer needed should be reassigned, or demobilized.

Unity of Command (Accountability) and Chain of Command

In the Incident Command System:

- **Unity of command** means that every individual is accountable to only one designated supervisor.
- **Chain of command** means that there is an orderly line of authority within the ranks of the organization, with lower levels subordinate to, and connected to, higher levels.

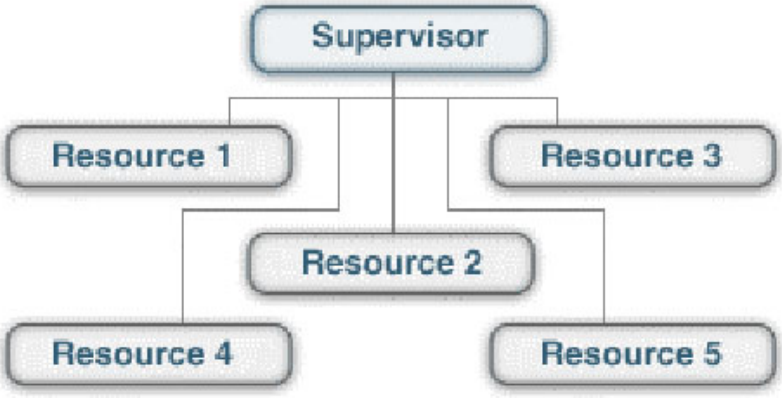
The above ICS principles are used to communicate direction and maintain management control. These principles do not apply to the exchange of information. Although orders must flow through the chain of command, members of the organization may directly communicate with each other to ask for or share information.

ICS team members work within the ICS position descriptions and follow the designated chain of command, regardless of their non-emergency positions or everyday administrative chain of command.

Span of Control

Span of control pertains to the number of individuals one supervisor can effectively manage. It is especially important to maintain an effective span of control at incidents where safety and accountability have top priority.

Management studies have shown that the span of control for a supervisor falls within a range of three (3) to seven (7), depending upon the skills of the supervisor and the complexity of the task being overseen. If a supervisor has fewer than three (3) or more than seven (7) people reporting, some adjustment to the organization should be considered.



Organizational chart showing five Resources reporting to one Supervisor.

Incident Action Plan

An Incident Action Plan is developed for each operational period (for example, every 12 hours).

The purpose of the Incident Action Plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with appropriate direction for that operational period. The plan may be oral or written.

Written Incident Action Plan

All levels of a growing organization must have a clear understanding of the tactical actions for the next operational period. It is recommended that written plans be used whenever:

- Oral plans could result in the miscommunication of critical information.
- Two or more jurisdictions or disciplines are involved.
- Large changes of personnel occur by operational periods.
- Personnel are working across more than one operational period.
- There is a full activation of the ICS organization.
- The incident has important legal, political, or public ramifications.
- Complex communication issues arise.
- A written record of actions taken is needed for historical or administrative purposes.

In addition, the Incident Commander may direct the organization to develop a written

Incident Action Plan at any time.

Documenting the Plan

In ICS, an Incident Briefing Form is used to record initial actions and list assigned and available resources. For example, during initial actions, the outgoing IC would brief the incoming IC using the Initial Briefing Form, ICS Form 201, during the transition meeting. As incidents grow in complexity and/or size, ICS provides a format and a systematic process for the development of a written Incident Action Plan.

Developing Incident Objectives

The initial step in the incident action planning process is to develop the incident objectives. The IC must develop incident objectives within a short timeframe after assuming command. After the incident objectives are clear, strategies and tasks to achieve the objectives can begin to be developed. Some objectives will change over the course of an incident. Some objectives will be achieved and new objectives will be developed. Strategies will also change. The Incident Objectives are documented and displayed in ICS Form 202.

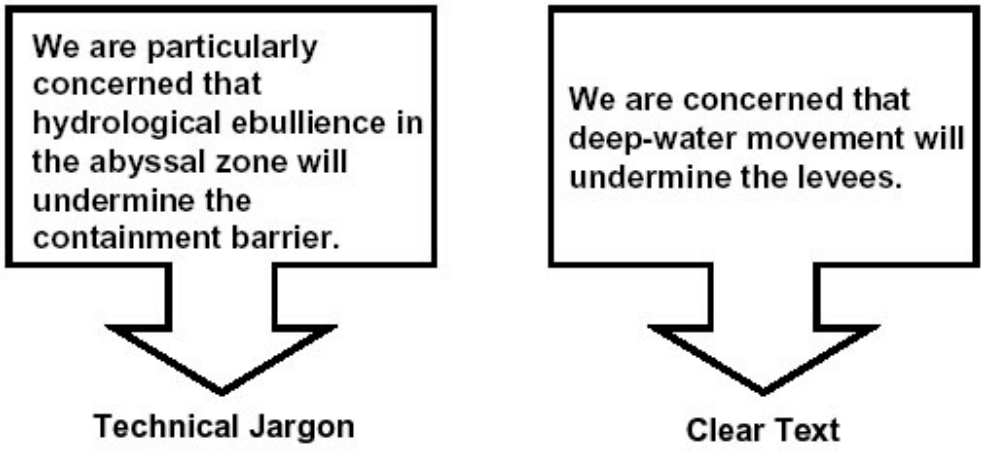
Comprehensive Resources Management

All ICS resources are ordered, received, assigned, and tracked systematically. Resources include personnel, tools, equipment and their operators, and expendable items (e.g., sandbags that are provided to homeowners to protect their properties, etc.).

The Incident Commander has a variety of resource-tracking and status systems to assist in the management of incident resources.

Common Terminology and Clear Text

The ability to communicate within the ICS is absolutely critical. An essential method for ensuring the ability to communicate is by using common terminology and clear text.



A critical part of an effective multiagency incident management system is for all communications to be in plain English. That is, **use clear text. Do not use radio codes, agency-specific codes, or jargon.**

Applying Common Terminology

In ICS, common terminology and designations are applied to:

Organizational Elements	Each ICS organizational element (e.g., Sections, Divisions and/or Groups, Branches) has a specified title.
Resources	Some resources have common designations based on their type or kind. Many resources are also classified by type to indicate their capabilities (e.g., types of helicopters, trucks, heavy equipment, etc.).
Facilities	Standard ICS facilities have specific names. Consistent names clarify the activities that take place at a specific facility, and what members of the organization can be found there. (Examples: Command Post, Staging Areas)
Position Titles	ICS management or supervisory positions are referred to by titles such as Officer, Chief, Director, Supervisor, etc.

Integrated Communications: Elements

Effective ICS communications includes three elements:

- Procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.
- The "hardware" systems used to transfer information.
- Planning for the use of all available communications frequencies and resources.

Integrated Communications: Planning

Every incident needs a Communications Plan. The plan can be simple and stated orally, or it can be complex and written. An Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS Form 205) is a component of the written Incident Action Plan.

An awareness of available communications resources, combined with an understanding of incident requirements, will enable the Communications Unit Leader to develop an effective Communications Plan.

Integrated Communications: Modes

It is not unusual for the communications needs on large incidents to outstrip available radio frequency resources.

Some incidents are conducted entirely without radio support. In such situations, other communications resources—cell phones, alpha pagers, e-mail, secure phone lines, etc.—may be used as the only communication methods for the incident.

Integrated Communications: Networks

At a minimum, any communication network must:

- Link supervisory personnel within the Operations Section to each other and to the Incident Commander.
- Provide the ability to communicate among resources assigned to tactical elements such as Branches, Divisions/Groups, and ground-to-air and air-to-air assets.
- Provide a link to the rest of the organization for resource status changes, logistical support, etc.

Resource Management: Procedures

Resource management is a key ICS element. Resource management ensures cost-effective use of resources and improved personal safety. Several procedures within ICS ensure good resource management, including:

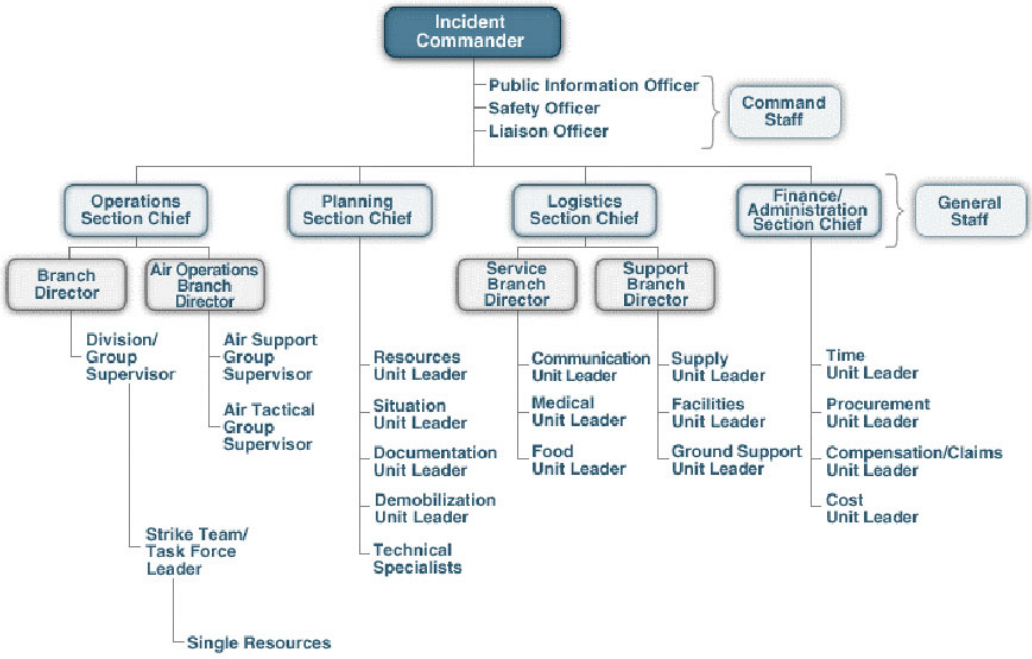
Check-In	All personnel must check in upon arrival at an incident. **Check in only once!**
Accountability (Unity of Command)	Everybody has only one supervisor.
Resources	The Resources Unit maintains status of all incident resources.
Assignment Lists	Division/Group Assignment Lists identify resources with active assignments in the Operations Section.
Unit Logs	Unit Logs record personnel assigned and major events in all ICS organizational elements.

ICS Organization

The **ICS Organization** lesson provides information on ICS organizational structure, initial organizational development at an incident, organizational expansion and contraction, the incident action planning process, and transfer of command.

Organizational Terminology: The ICS Organizational Chart

The graphic below shows a generic organizational chart with associated key terms. Key ICS titles are associated with the person assigned to each managerial level.



ICS organizational chart, with the Incident Commander at the top. Subordinate to the Incident Commander is the Command Staff, made up of the Information, Safety, and Liaison Officers. Also subordinate to the Incident Commander is the General Staff, made up of the Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Finance/Administration Section Chiefs. The Operations Section is made up of a general branch and an Air Operations Branch. Subordinate to the general branches are divisions/groups with subordinate strike teams/task forces and single resources. Subordinate to the Air Operations Branch are the Air Support and Air Tactical Groups. The Planning Section is made up of the Resources, Situation, Documentation, and Demobilization Units, as well as Technical Specialists. The Logistics Section is made up the Service and Support Branches. Subordinate to the Service Branch are the Communication, Medical, and Food Units. Subordinate to the Support Branch are the Supply, Facilities, and Ground Support Units. The Finance/Administration Section is made up of the Time, Procurement, Compensation/Claims, and Cost Units.

ICS Organizational Chart

The ICS organizational chart is a graphic representation of the incident, including:

- Positions and functions activated.
- Chain of command.
- Reporting relationships.
- Responsibilities delegated.
- Information flow.

Using a graphical representation is a simple yet valuable information tool. Therefore, it is important to maintain the standard terminology and layout of the organizational chart as you apply ICS on incidents.

ICS—A Flexible System

Standardization of the organizational chart and terms does not limit its flexibility. A key principle of ICS is its flexibility. The ICS organization may be expanded easily from a very small operation for routine incidents into a larger organization capable of handling catastrophic events.

There are no hard and fast rules for expanding the ICS organization. Many incidents will never require the activation of the entire General Staff. Others will require some members of the staff, or all of them. Experienced Incident Commanders can predict workloads and potential staffing needs, regardless of the kind of incident.

Organizing the Incident Command

As you know, the Incident Commander has the overall responsibility for the management of the incident. Even if other functions are not filled, an Incident Commander will always be designated.

After establishing command, the Incident Commander will consult with Agency Administrators to determine the type of command that is required for the incident. The Incident Commander will then identify the initial organization and staffing for the incident.

Types of Command

The Incident Commander knows that the command function may be carried out in two ways:

- As a **Single Command** in which the Incident Commander will have complete responsibility for incident management.
- As a **Unified Command** in which responding agencies and/or jurisdictions with responsibility for the incident share incident management.

Two types of Incident Command are Single Command and Unified Command.

Single Command

Under a Single Command, one person—the Incident Commander—has responsibility for managing the entire incident, as directed and delegated by the Agency Administrator. Although the Incident Commander consults with other authorities as necessary, he or she approves the Incident Action Plan and makes the final decisions on the response.

Single Command with one agency.

Unified Command

If a Unified Command is needed, Incident Commanders representing agencies or jurisdictions that share responsibility for the incident manage the response from a single Incident Command Post.

Under a Unified Command, a single, coordinated Incident Action Plan will direct all activities. The Incident Commanders will supervise a single Command and General Staff organization and speak with one voice.

Unified Command with two or more agencies.

Deputies

The Incident Commander may have one or more deputies. An individual assuming a deputy role must be equally capable of assuming the primary role. Therefore, a Deputy Incident Commander must be able to assume the Incident Commander's role. Three reasons to designate deputies are to:

- Perform specific tasks as requested by the Incident Commander.
- Perform the Incident Command function in a relief capacity (e.g., to take over the next operational period).
- Represent an assisting agency that may share jurisdiction or have jurisdiction in the future.

Planning Section

The Planning Section is responsible for:

- Collecting and evaluating incident situation information.
- Preparing situation status reports.
- Displaying situation information.
- Maintaining status of resources.
- Preparing and documenting the Incident Action Plan.
- Preparing and archiving incident-related documentation.
- Demobilizing incident resources.

Each of these responsibilities will be assigned to a unit under the Planning Section. In addition, information and intelligence functions are traditionally located in the Planning Section.

Planning Section Units

The following organizational chart shows the Planning Section units.

Organizational chart with the Planning Section Chief at the top. Subordinate to the Planning Section Chief are the Resources Unit Leader, the Situation Unit Leader, the Documentation Unit Leader, the Demobilization Unit Leader, and the Technical Specialists.

- **Resources Unit:** Conducts all check-in activities and maintains the status of all incident resources. The Resources Unit plays a significant role in preparing the written Incident Action Plan.
- **Situation Unit:** Collects and analyzes information on the current situation, prepares situation displays and situation summaries, and develops maps and projections.
- **Documentation Unit:** Provides duplication services, including the written Incident Action Plan. Maintains and archives all incident-related documentation.

- **Demobilization Unit:** Assists in ensuring that resources are released from the incident in an orderly, safe, and cost-effective manner.
- **Technical Specialists** (Individuals with skills or knowledge that may be of use to the Incident Management Team) may also be assigned to the Planning Section.

Logistics Section

The Logistics Section is responsible for providing services and support to meet the needs of the incident or event organization. This Section:

- Handles everything from setting up and maintaining the on-site computer network, to providing hotel rooms and food for response personnel, to providing security at the incident facilities.
- Supports personnel and resources directly assigned to the incident. For example, the Medical Unit would care only for incident personnel and would not care for community members injured in the flood.

Early recognition of the need for a Logistics Section can reduce time and money spent on an incident.

Logistics Section Branches

Logistics personnel may be organized into the following Branches:

- Service Branch.
- Support Branch.

A Director manages each Branch. Each Branch may have up to three Units assigned to it based upon need. Unit Leaders report to their Branch Director.

Logistics Section organizational chart with Logistics Section Chief and Subordinate Service and Support Branch Directors.

Logistics Service Branch

The Logistics Service Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Communications Unit:** Develops the Communication Plan, distributes and maintains communications equipment, and manages the Incident Communications Center.

- **Medical Unit:** Develops the Medical Plan, and provides first aid and light medical treatment for personnel assigned to the incident.
- **Food Unit:** Supplies the food and potable water for all incident personnel.

Logistics Section organizational chart with Service Branch Director. Subordinate to the Service Branch Director are the Communication, Medical, and Food Unit Leaders.

Logistics Support Branch

The Logistics Support Branch can be staffed to include a:

- **Supply Unit:** Orders personnel, equipment, and supplies for the Incident Management Team. The Unit stores and distributes supplies, and services nonexpendable equipment. All resource orders are placed through the Supply Unit.
- **Facilities Unit:** Sets up and maintains required facilities to support the incident
- Provides managers for the Incident Base and Camps. Also responsible for facility security.
- **Ground Support Unit:** Provides transportation and maintains and fuels vehicles assigned to the incident to support internal operations. (Transportation resources for external (tactical) assignments are located under the Operations Section.)

Logistics Section organizational chart with Support Branch Director. Subordinate to the Support Branch Director are the Supply, Facilities, and Ground Support Unit Leaders.

Finance/Administration Section

The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for monitoring incident-related costs, and administering any necessary procurement contracts. The following four Units may be established in the Finance/Administration Section:

- Time Unit
- Cost Unit
- Procurement Unit
- Compensation/Claims Unit

A Unit Leader is assigned to manage each Unit.

Finance/Administration Section Units

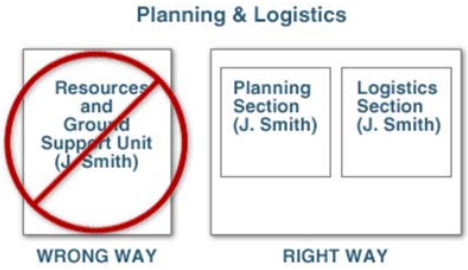
The Finance/Administration Section includes the Time, Cost, Procurement, and Compensation/Claims Units. Scroll down to review the responsibilities of each Unit.

Finance/Administration Section organizational chart, with the Finance/Administration Section Chief at the top.
Subordinate to the Section Chief are the Time, Cost, Procurement, and Compensation/Claims Unit leaders.

- **Time Unit:** Ensures that all personnel time on the event is recorded.
- **Cost Unit:** Collects all cost information and provides cost estimates and cost savings recommendations.
- **Procurement Unit:** Processes administrative paperwork associated with contract services.
- **Compensation/Claims Unit:** Combines two important functions:
  - **Compensation** is responsible for seeing that all documentation related to workers compensation is correctly completed. Also, Compensation maintains files of injuries and/or illnesses associated with the incident.
  - **Claims** handles the investigation of all claims involving damaged property associated with or involved in the incident.

Avoid Combining ICS Positions

It is important to avoid combining ICS positions. However, one person may be assigned more than one function on the incident organization chart.



On the left side, two units are being combined into one, which is incorrect, and on the right side is the separation of the Planning and Logistics Section, which is correct.

Positions should not be combined within the organization, however, because problems could be created later if the merged positions have to separate.

Predicting Incident Workloads

Incident workload patterns are predictable throughout the life of the incident. For example:

- In the Planning Section, the Resources and Situation Units will be busy in the initial phases of an incident, while the main workload for the Documentation and Demobilization Units will come later.
- In Logistics, the Supply and Communication Units do the bulk of the early work in an incident.

The arrival of the media and agency representatives is always a good indication of increasing complexity for the Command Staff.

Transfer of Command Procedures

One of the main features of ICS are procedures to transfer command with minimal disruption. These procedures may be used anytime personnel in supervisory positions change.

Three key procedures should be followed, whenever possible:

- The transfer should be face to face.
- The transfer should include a complete briefing.
- The effective date and time of the transfer is announced to all affected personnel.

Reasons for transfer of command were presented in a previous lesson.

The Transfer-of-Command Briefing

A transfer-of-command briefing should always take place. The briefing should include the following critical information:

- Situation status
- Incident objectives and priorities (Incident Action Plan)
- Current organization
- Resource assignments
- Resources en route and/or ordered
- Facilities established
- Communications Plan
- Prognosis, concerns, and related issues
- Introduction of Command Staff and General Staff

Avoid "Falling Through the Cracks"

It is critical to keep information from "falling through the cracks" during changes of incident command. One important information tool is ICS Form 201, Incident Briefing Form. Although the intent of the ICS Form 201 is to be used by the initial IC to transfer command to a more qualified IC, the form can be used as an outline for more complex transfer of command situations. Your agency may have other tools for this purpose. Whether your agency uses ICS Form 201 or another form, you should have some mechanism to ensure that important information does not "get lost."

Incident Resources

The **Incident Resources** lesson:

- Describes functional roles in resource management.
- Describes the kinds of resources often used in incidents.
- Discusses how resources are procured.
- Provide examples of how resources are typed for various applications.
- Explains why resource status keeping is important to effective incident operations.

Resource Management Activities

Resource management activities fall into three general areas:

- **Resource Identification:** What resources are needed, and how they are defined or "typed?"
- **Resource Procurement:** Where are the resources located, who owns them, and what are the conditions of procurement and restrictions on use?
- **Resource Supervision:** How are the resources "packaged" for tactical application and tracking?

Identifying and Defining Resources

ICS resources can be factored into two categories:

- Tactical (External) Resources
- Support (Internal) Resources

Tactical Resources

Personnel and major items of equipment that are available or potentially available to the Operations Section on assignment to incidents are called tactical—or external—resources.

Because tactical resources are deployed in direct response roles, they are the primary concern in resource management. All tactical resources are assigned to the Operations Section.

Support Resources

In addition to tactical resources, there are support resources.

Support resources include all other resources required to support the incident. Food, communications equipment, tents, supplies, and fleet vehicles are examples of support resources.

Describing Resources: Kind

Resources can be described by both **kind** and **type**. Let's begin by reviewing resource kinds.

The **resource kind** describes what the resource is. For example, a helicopter, medical staff, a portable X-ray machine, a bulldozer, and a plow are all kinds of resources.

Kinds of resources can be as broad as necessary to suit the incident application.

Some kinds of resources may be used by different ICS sections such as Logistics and Operations.

Describing Resources: Type

The **resource type** describes a capability for that kind of resource.

Many tactical resources, such as helicopters, will have a wide variety of capabilities and uses. If the Operations Section Chief simply ordered a helicopter (resource kind), the resource delivered may be inadequate.

For this reason, various kinds of resources used for ICS applications should be "typed" whenever possible.

Advantages of Typing Resources

"Typing" is a system of describing the size, capability, equipment, and staffing characteristics of a specific resource. Following are the advantages of typing resources:

- **In Planning:** Knowing the specific capabilities of the kinds of resources helps planners decide the type and quantity of resources needed.
- **In Ordering:** Ordering resources by type saves time, reduces errors, and reduces nonessential communications.
- **In Monitoring Resource Use:** Type descriptions enable managers to monitor for undercapability or overcapability. Careful monitoring of resource performance can lead to the use of less costly resources, ultimately increasing work performance and reducing cost.

Procuring Resources: Sources

After identifying a needed resource, it is usually easy to figure out where to get it. Typical procurement sources for ICS resources include:

- **In-house sources:** Other locations or agencies within a city.
- **Mutual-aid agencies:** Agencies with which a city has formal agreements covering the use or sharing of resources.
- **Other government entities:** Agencies at any level of government that can be requested to provide the required resources (e.g., USACE).
- **Commercial sources:** Private-sector producers and/or suppliers of the needed resource.

Processing Orders

Even though processing orders for resources is the responsibility of the Logistics Section, all sections should understand the information needed to implement an efficient ordering process. Make sure that orders:

- Are approved by the chain of command.
- Describe the specific requirements, if the resource is not typed.
- State any other important factors or restrictions.
- Name a suggested source (if known).
- Include a specific timeframe in which the resource is needed.
- Specify a delivery point or contact.

Payment

Procuring incident resources requires coordination between the Logistics and Finance/Administration Sections. To establish an effective procurement process, personnel assigned to Logistics and Finance/Administration must have the necessary procurement and contract authorities (another benefit of resource typing).

Incident activities may be halted or hampered without onsite procurement and contracting authority.

Organizing Resources

After resources have arrived at the incident, many will need to be organized to ensure efficient supervision within the limits of effective span of control. There are three ways of organizing resources at an incident:

- Single Resources
- Task Forces
- Strike Teams

Each of these methods of organization will be described on the next pages.

Single Resources

Single resources are individual personnel, single pieces of equipment (with or without operators), or a crew of individuals, with an identified work supervisor. A single resource is often the most common way of using initial resources on an incident.

Single resources can be typed to reflect capability. Unless a single resource is typed, its specific capabilities may not be clear to everyone.

Task Forces

Task Forces are any combination and number of single resources (within span-of-control limits) assembled for a particular tactical need. Task Forces may be:

- A mix of different kinds of resources.
- The same kind but different types of resources.

Organizing resources into Task Forces provides the mix of resources needed for a specific assignment, and reduces span of control. This is both safer and more efficient use of resources.
For example, the graphic depicts a Task Force consisting of three different kinds of earth-moving equipment.

Strike Teams

Incident resources can also be organized into **Strike Teams**. Strike Teams consist of resources that are of the **same type**.

Strike Teams are a good way to organize multiple single resources that share the same characteristics.

For example, a Strike Team could be made up of three identical handicapped access vans.

Task Forces and Strike Teams: Requirements

Both Task Forces and Strike Teams are required to:

- Have a Leader.
- Have communications between team members and leaders, and between leaders and the next higher level of supervision.
- Have their own transportation, when required.
- Organize within span-of-control limits.

Advantages of Task Forces and Strike Teams

Organizing into Task Forces and Strike Teams offers several distinct advantages, including:

- Enabling more effective resource use planning.
- Providing an efficient way of quickly ordering what is necessary.
- A net reduction in the time required to communicate, because critical information is conveyed to Task Force and Strike Team Leaders rather than to single resources.
- Increasing the ability to expand the organization for large incidents while maintaining good span of control.
- Providing close resource control and accountability.

Maintaining Resource Status

Maintaining status of all resources assigned to the incident is an important aspect of resource management. Knowing where resources are at all times is vital to ensuring safety on the incident.

In addition, not all tactical resources at an incident may be usable at any given time. For a variety of reasons, some resources may be temporarily out-of-service or placed into an available (ready) but not assigned status.

Resource Status Conditions

All tactical resources at an incident will be assigned to one of the three following status conditions:

- **Assigned:** Assigned resources are working on an assignment under the direction of a supervisor.
- **Available:** Available resources are assembled, have been issued their equipment, and are ready for deployment. Available resources are located at one of the staging areas.

- **Out-of-Service:** Out-of-service resources are not ready for available or assigned status.

Out-of-Service Resources

Resources may be out-of-service for a number of reasons, including:

- Routine servicing of vehicles or other equipment.
- To allow for rest/downtime.
- Insufficient personnel to operate available equipment.
- Environmental reasons, such as darkness or weather.
- Financial reasons (e.g., when personnel exceed allowed overtime costs).

Resources that go out-of-service for other than mechanical or staffing reasons will usually be sent to the Incident Base or other designated location as determined by the incident.

Changing Resource Status

Resource status is maintained and changed by the supervisor who has the resources under assignment. On larger incidents, a Resources Unit, if established, will also maintain status on all resources assigned to the incident.

Organizational chart with the Planning Section Chief at the top. Subordinate to the Section Chief are the Resources Unit Leader, the Situation Unit Leader, the Documentation Unit Leader, the Demobilization Unit Leader, and Technical Specialists. The Resources Unit Leader is highlighted.

Who Can Change Resource Status?

Depending on the overall incident organization, the persons who supervise the resource either directly or indirectly can change its status. This can include:

- The person in charge of the single resource.
- A Task Force or Strike Team Leader.
- A Division or Group Supervisor.
- A Branch Director.
- The Operations Section Chief or Incident Commander.

The Resources Unit will not, on its own authority, change the status of resources assigned to Operations.

Communicating Resource Status Changes

All status changes that last for more than a few minutes must be communicated to the appropriate organizational elements. The individual who makes the status change is responsible for making sure that the change is communicated up the chain of command and to the person or unit responsible for maintaining overall resource status at the incident.

For routine changes of status that do not impact the Incident Action Plan (end of shift, lunch breaks, etc.), the information may not need to go beyond the next level Supervisor. If the change of status is the result of mechanical break down, lack of supplies, or similar problems, the IAP could be impacted, and the information will be shared more widely among the Operations Staff and with the Incident Commander.

Information about the status change will be passed to the Resources Unit.

Resource Status Keeping Systems

There are several resource status keeping systems that can be used to track resources at incidents.

Magnetic Symbols or Icons on Maps or Status Boards

Magnetic symbols or icons are sometimes used to track resources. Symbols are prepared in different shapes, sizes, and colors, with space to pencil in the resource designator. Then, the symbols are placed on maps or boards to indicate the location of assignment.

Computer System

A laptop computer can be used with a simple file management or spreadsheet program to maintain resource information. This system can be used to compile check-in information and then be maintained to reflect current resource status.

Card System

Several versions of card systems are available to track resource status. One of these systems uses different-colored, T-shaped cards for each kind of resource. The cards are used to record information about the resource and filed in racks by assignment location. The T-shaped cards are used primarily by the Fire Service and are used infrequently by other response agencies.